

News Release
U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
District of Rhode Island



July 18, 2006

**Three California women are charged with bank fraud
and identity theft in withdrawals at bank branches**

A federal complaint has been filed in Rhode Island against three California women, charging them with bank fraud and identity theft. North Providence Police arrested the women on July 11 after being notified of suspicious withdrawals at Bank of America. A subsequent investigation by North Providence Police and the Secret Service developed evidence of identity thefts of Bank of America customers.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente, Thomas M. Powers, Resident Agent in Charge of the United States Secret Service Providence Office, and North Providence Police Chief Ernest Spaziano jointly announced the complaint, which was filed on July 13 in U.S. District Court, Providence.

The defendants are **Debbie Jolene Tucker**, 44, **Renea Johnson**, 54, and **Zelpha Colleen Conyers**, 53, all of the Los Angeles area. They appeared today in U.S. District Court, Providence before Magistrate Judge Lincoln D. Almond, who ordered them detained. They are also being held in lieu of \$250,000 bail each on state charges stemming from the same investigation.

According to an affidavit supporting the complaint, on July 11, a woman later identified as Tucker, using a credit card and a California driver's license in another woman's name, tried to withdraw \$3,000 at a Bank of America branch in Cranston. She left the bank without the withdrawal, however, when a teller said she had to notify the manager. The manager put out an alert to other branches.

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A short while later, Tucker, using another identity, withdrew \$1,500 at a branch on Mineral Spring Avenue, North Providence. Still later, Conyers, using yet another woman's identity, withdrew \$4,800 at a branch on Smithfield Road, North Providence.

Wig change

The Smithfield Road branch manger contacted the Mineral Spring Avenue branch manger, who went to the Smithfield Road branch and saw Tucker enter a car with another woman. The manager recognized Tucker from her withdrawal at the Mineral Spring branch. The manager then saw the two women change wigs inside the car, noted the car's license plate number and contacted North Providence Police, who put out an alert.

A short time later, Seekonk Police stopped the car on Route 6 and contacted North Providence. In luggage at a the women's hotel room on Route 6, police found California drivers' licenses, credit cards and social security cards in the names of ten women. They also found Bank of America customer profiles for seven of those women and computer maps of Bank of America branches in Florida. In bags the women were carrying, police found nine wigs.

North Providence Police notified the United States Secret Service. The Secret Service is also investigating suspicious withdrawals of a similar nature at Bank of America branches in several other states.

The charges against the women – bank fraud and aggravated identity theft – are felonies and therefore subject to a review by a grand jury. A complaint is merely an allegation and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Lee H. Vilker is prosecuting the case.

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